Americans Can Joke On W'gate

By DICK KLEINER

LOS ANGELES — (NEA) — There is increasing evidence that America's sense of humor will enable us to survive the Watergate mess, as it has enabled us to survive past catastrophes — wars, depressions and scandals.

Whenever things get tough in America, we start making jokes. It doesn't make the problem go away, but it makes it easier to live with. And that's the way things are going now, as the American sense of humor begins to exert itself.

A joke going around: "Have you heard the new loyalty oath: 'Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Committee For the Re-election Of the President?' "

A bumper sticker: "IMPEACHMENT WITH HONOR."

Milton Berle's gag: "I overheard two men talking on the presidential yacht. One of them said, 'Please say we're going north — don't say we're going up the river.' "

At the Emmy awards, Johnny Carson said: "I haven't heard so much credit given to others since James McCord."

Jack Carter's gag: "I hope Nixon won't be impeached — then we'd have Sinatra for president."

Jack Burns and Avery Schreiber are coming out with a comedy album about Watergate. Sample bit:

"ANNOUNCER: The Tonight Show, with special guest host Richard Nixon, the music of H. R. Haldemann and His Buck Passers, the singing of the Watergate Seven— has been preempted."

Another joke going around: "Have you seen the new bed? It's a Watergate Bed — you can lie on it."

Also from the Emmy Awards show Don Rickles, explaining how the TV academy voted, said: "The members vote by secret ballot. In this country, you know how secret that is."

Two men have come out with a card game. The Watergate Scandal Game. Excerpt from "Instructions On How To Play":

"Cheating and deception not only add zest to this game, but it's the only sure way to come out on top."

Another Milton Berle gag: "The GOP has aready decided on its '76 campaign slogan. 'Four more years — with two off for good behavior.' "

Bob Hope says he's decided to go on tour after all next Christmas — "I'm going to do a show for the Watergate Wounded."

During the News and Documentary Emmy Award show, Walter Cronkite referred to "the reliable accounting firm, Price Watergate."

Edward Asner greets friends with a clenched fist and the words: "Free the Watergate 500."

Still another gag from Milton Berle: "Being a public figure in Washington these days is difficult. One week you're on the cover of Time, and the next week you're doing it."

There is even a subliminal

(Continued on Page 7)

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Americans Can Joke About Watergate

(Continued from Page 4)

gag effect, as witness the case of Jim Nabors, who asked his maid if she had seen his Watergate. He meant his Waterpik.

Another gag making the rounds: "Things are so bad in Washington that Nixon is demanding a recount."

During the committee hearings, many programs were preempted, among them Monty Hall's Let's Make a Deal. Hall says they just preempted one version of Lets Make a Deal to televise another.

Edgar Bergen's gag: "I've been hearing so many Watergate jokes that I'm bugged."

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